

am certain that even many "languages" will never tell us the ethnographic whole. It is always changing, as are the speakers and the listeners, the readers and the writers.

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The Story of the Sechelt Nation, by Lester Peterson. Published by Harbour Publishing (Madeira Park, B.C.) for the Sechelt Indian Band, 1990. Pp. xiii, 145. \$15.95 paper.

If one has read Sunshine Coast author Lester Peterson's previous books, *The Gibsons Landing Story* or *The Cape Scott Story*, one comes hopefully to his new book on the Sechelt Indians. Peterson tells a good story, and his taste for the lore of historical geography and oral history was apparent in those earlier works. In *The Story of the Sechelt Nation* he takes on a very different task. This book is a presentation of mythic accounts, ethnographic details, and community history of the Sechelt Indian Band of Sechelt, B.C. and is based on long personal friendships with some of the most knowledgeable members of that native community. Peterson started working in the late 1950s with Basil Joe, Reg Paull, and others, recording their stories, reminiscences, and opinions. He then wove these into a tapestry of cultural history which the Sechelt band council agreed to co-publish.

For an outsider to write the story of a native community today is both demanding and daring. One of the messages from native communities in these post-Oka times is that the native experience and perspective differs from that of the mainstream community and that many native people resent outsiders speaking for them. This allows us to focus clearly on the task that Peterson has undertaken. The product must represent not only the facts but also the viewpoints and values of the community. The obligation is brought more clearly into perspective when one realizes that this account, since it has the imprimatur of the band itself, will probably be used by the Sechelts of today and the future as a reference book for their history and beliefs. That being the case, I wish I could say that Peterson's book fulfils this obligation, but I cannot. It is neither the readable and authoritative account nor the reference source on the Sechelts that it could and should be.

Peterson approaches the story of the Sechelts from a geographical and comparative perspective. As he presents it, the story commences with mythic accounts; it then progresses through the more recent legendary exploits of Sechelt forebears to happenings and cultural practice within

living memory. What would have been a real contribution would be to have those actual accounts refer to, accompanied by a clear documentation of the cultural information about aboriginal ways and beliefs just as the knowledgeable Sechelt elders told them to Peterson. What we *have* is a book about some of the historical happenings and cultural lore that Sechelts associate with the geographical features of their traditional homeland. And to this the author adds a heavy admixture of personal opinion about how Sechelt traditional life and beliefs relate to other ancient cultures and mythologies. After a couple of readings, I realize that there is a lot of information here. But it is hard to appreciate. There are no chapter sub-headings to divide material up into sections; there is no index and no glossary of the many Sechelt terms.

That brings up the issue of the way Sechelt terms are transcribed. Throughout the book there are Sechelt words rendered in a home-made orthography for which no pronunciation key is provided. The whole issue of the Sechelt language is handled in a way which does not help the reader. Various Sechelt sounds are not distinguished (e.g. w, xw and xw are all written 'w'; just as k, k', k, and k' are all written as 'k'; etc.). Peterson obviously did not hear the difference between the sounds of the Sechelt language. Also, he is consistently wrong when he tries to analyze native words into their parts and then relate concepts. For example, he relates the Sechelt concepts *sun*, *syayekw*, and *medicine* (note *syayekwhl*, "medicine man") since the words sound alike to him (p. 106), but really they are not related at all. In fact, although the book is filled with references drawn from Sechelt words and names, almost all of them are wrong. For instance, he says that the Ancient Greek term for "river," *potamus* [*sic*], "made its way to the Pacific Northwest, to be retained intact, both in sound and meaning, by aboriginal Sechelt" (p. 125). But the Sechelt word means "flood," not river, and derives historically from a perfectly good proto-Spanish word. It is dangerous business indeed to attempt to argue for ancient folk-contacts based on words that "sound" the same. Readers should beware of the most simple-sounding generalizations. On page 3 we are told that "no European words were grafted into the Sechelt language," but in fact there are dozens of loan-words from English and French which entered Sechelt (many through Chinook Jargon, e.g. *lam*, "rum or whiskey"; 'iks, "egg(s)"; *tala*, "dollar or money"; and *kapu*, "coat (< French)."

What is even more problematic is Peterson's presentation of some extremely naive hypotheses as fact. He states that the most recent ice age lasted until "between 4,000 and 3,600 years ago" (p. 5), and notes the certain presence of humans in California as early as "100,000 to 125,000

years ago" (p. 7), etc. And even the far-fetched relations between the Sechelt and other ancient peoples and customs tax the imagination. For example, a Sechelt account in which a hunter is killed by a mountain goat is related to Greek "tragedy," which derives from the word for "goat" (p. 13).

But there is apparently enough to this book that the Sechelt band council asked to have it published. What seems amazing to me is that a publisher who has been around as long as Howard White would not have sent this manuscript out for review before publishing it. If he had, this book might have been very different.

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Western Oblate Studies 1/Études Oblates de l'Ouest 1, edited by R. Huel.
Edmonton: Western Canadian Publishers, 1990. Pp. vi, 210; maps.
\$15.00 paper.

Western Oblate Studies 1, the proceedings of the 1988 symposium on the history of the Oblates in western and northern Canada, contains two articles dealing with British Columbia and much of general value to researchers here. They ought to look at the whole volume, and they should resist their tendency to disregard any studies *en français*.

The symposium and the volume are based on the Western Oblate History Project. It aims to produce critical scholarly works on the history of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a Roman Catholic congregation of priests and brothers, active in western Canada since the 1840s. A commercial company, Western Canada Publishers, was formed to manage publication of refereed research for the project.

Raymond Huel of the Department of History of the University of Lethbridge, symposium organizer and editor, acknowledges the denominational and ethnic biases of Oblate records. Yet the fact of the Oblate experience in western Canada remains, as does the possibility of objective research on it. Huel's own lead article deals critically with problems in the supply of northern missions and with the conflict between two of their administrators, Grandin and Faraud. In this and in essays on Providence Mission, Alberta settlement, Metis leaders, and Catholic-Protestant conflict, the approaches employed raise valuable comparative points for British Columbia scholars. There were different native peoples west of the Rocky Mountains but the same missionary order, fur trade company, federal